

## **RANKING TENNESSEE'S HEALTH STATUS RELATIVE TO THE U.S., 1996<sup>6</sup>**

- In 1996, Tennessee ranked 42nd among the states in the United States in overall “healthiness”.<sup>7</sup> It ranked 35th in 1990. Tennessee was one of 34 states whose healthiness score dropped between 1995 and 1996, and was among 13 states showing a declining score between 1990 and 1996.
- Ranking first in “healthiness” in the 1996 report was Minnesota, followed by Utah, Hawaii, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Ranking at the bottom of the scale were Louisiana (50th), Nevada and Mississippi (tied at 48th), West Virginia (47th), and South Carolina and New Mexico (45th).
- Between 1990 and 1996, Tennessee’s healthiness score declined by 2%. This contrasted with the 3.6% increase registered for the nation. Increase in risk for heart disease, high prevalence of smoking, and a decline in support for public health care are among the most common causes for declining state ranks overall.
- Tennessee’s healthiness score in 1996 was 11% below the average for all states combined. It was 5% below average in 1990 and 8% below in 1995.
- In 1996, Tennessee ranked close to or slightly above the national average in level of employment, infant survival, and availability of adequate prenatal care. Tennessee’s strengths were identified as low unemployment, a low infant mortality rate and adequate prenatal care relative to the U.S.
- Since the 1990 rankings, Tennessee, like New York, showed an increase of more than 6% in the prevalence of disease components of the healthiness measure.<sup>8</sup> Tennessee increased faster than national averages on the three disease measures--heart disease, cancer and communicable disease.

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<sup>6</sup>ReliaStar Financial Corporation in Minneapolis, Minnesota provides annual Health Rankings by State to allow comparisons of the overall “healthiness” of each state in the U.S. on a variety of indicators, such as lifestyle, access to health care services, occupational safety and disability, disease and mortality. The 1996 report was the 8th annual report in the series. Scores are the percent above or below the average health of all states, and comparing scores between states reflects the actual change that has occurred between years. Much of the data are for 1994 or earlier in the 1996 report.

<sup>7</sup>Each year the ReliaStar Financial Corporation ranks states on an overall healthiness score. This score was a composite measure of 17 indicators incorporating such factors as mortality, morbidity, employment, education, occupational safety, and access to primary health care. A state’s score is the percent above or below the average health of all states in a given year or period.

<sup>8</sup>These components include heart disease measured using three-year average age- and race-adjusted death rates due to heart disease; cancer cases measured as the rate of projected cases of cancer per 100,000 population; and a three-year average of AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis cases to measure infectious disease.